



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

REMARKS BY THE VICE CHANCELLOR DURING THE UNSA 2026 SWEARING IN CEREMONY IN TAIFA HALL ON SATURDAY, MAY 23, 2026 AT 2:00PM

The Acting Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs Prof. Demesi Mande
Chair and Members of the UNSA Independent Electoral Commission,
Members of the University Community ; Staff and Students,
The newly elected UNSA Leaders,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

It gives me great pleasure to join you this afternoon as we witness the swearing in of the new student leadership team for 2026/2027. This is an important and historic moment not only for the student community, but also for the University of Nairobi as a whole. Indeed, this swearing-in ceremony is not merely a transition of student leadership; it is a reaffirmation of the democratic values, institutional resilience, and shared aspirations that define this great University.

Allow me to begin by congratulating all the elected student leaders. Your election is a sign that fellow students have placed their trust and confidence in you. Leadership is never an easy journey, and I know that getting to this point required commitment, resilience, patience, and courage. Today, therefore, is not only a celebration of victory, but also the beginning of a solemn responsibility.

These elections will remain significant in the history of our University. They were conducted during a period marked by legal processes, uncertainty, and intense interest from across the student community. Yet despite these challenges, the democratic process prevailed. That in itself is a powerful lesson on the resilience of institutions, the importance of the rule of law, and the strength of democratic engagement within our University community.



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

I therefore wish to sincerely thank the student community for the patience, maturity, and restraint demonstrated throughout the period of court injunctions and electoral delays. Your commitment to peace and constitutional processes reflects the character and resilience of the University of Nairobi student body.

I also wish to commend the 2026 UNSA Independent Electoral Commission under the leadership of Prof. Collins Odote. Thank you for your dedication, professionalism, credibility, and service throughout this process. Conducting elections in an institution as large and dynamic as our University is never an easy undertaking. Yet through your persistence and commitment, you safeguarded the integrity of the process and upheld the democratic values of our University. The University Management deeply appreciates your service.

The University of Nairobi has a long and proud history of student leadership and democratic participation. Over the years, student leaders from this institution have gone on to serve Kenya and the world in various capacities. Our student elections have often reflected the vibrancy, diversity, debate, and democratic consciousness that define this great University. From the historic transition to online elections in 2020 to the continued strengthening of institutional governance and student representation, the University of Nairobi continues to demonstrate that student leadership remains an essential pillar of university governance and nation-building.

For me personally, this occasion is also quite special because your leadership journey begins at almost the same time as my own journey as the 9th Vice Chancellor of this great University. In many ways, we are beginning this chapter together. As we commence this new session, I call upon all of us to actively reflect on the virtues of good leadership as a cornerstone of a successful University in word and in deed.

I therefore extend a hand of partnership to you. My hope is that we shall work together openly, respectfully, and honestly in building a stronger University community for all our students.

As student leaders, you now carry the responsibility of representing the voices, ideas, concerns, and aspirations of your fellow students. Leadership must rise above personal interests, division, and short-term popularity. It must be anchored in service, integrity,



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

accountability, and commitment to the collective good. I encourage you to embrace servant leadership ; leadership that listens, unites, builds trust, and seeks solutions.

As you assume office, you do so at a time when our country is increasingly entering a politically active season. National political processes often come with many temptations, pressures, and competing interests. I therefore urge you to remain vigilant and principled. Do not allow yourselves to be misused for political mobilization that seeks to divide students, create chaos, or sow divisions among Kenyans.

The University must remain a space for ideas, dialogue, intellectual engagement, and peaceful democratic expression. While freedom of expression is a fundamental right within any democratic society, it must always be exercised responsibly and within the framework of the law and institutional values.

You have been elected first and foremost to serve students and protect the interests of this institution. I therefore urge you to lead with responsibility, maturity, and integrity. Resist division, avoid unnecessary confrontation, and always place the welfare of students and the stability of the University above personal or political interests.

This leadership opportunity is also a learning experience. Through it, you will gain valuable lessons in governance, accountability, negotiation, public engagement, and ethical decision-making. These experiences will help shape you into future leaders capable of contributing positively to our institutions and our nation.

I encourage you to lead not only with ambition, but also with humility, empathy, and a genuine commitment to service. Uphold patriotism, become worthy ambassadors of the University of Nairobi, and remember that the true measure of leadership lies in the positive impact you make in the lives of others.

As I conclude, let me assure you that my office remains open to constructive engagement, consultation, and dialogue. We may not always agree on every issue, but we must remain committed to mutual respect and the shared goal of making this University better for all.

I look forward to working with you as we continue to strengthen student welfare, academic excellence, institutional harmony, and the reputation of the University of Nairobi.



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

Congratulations once again!

Thank you very much.

PROF. AYUB N. GITAU, PhD

VICE CHANCELLOR.